KATE DE RYCKER

Commodifying the Author: The Mediation of Aretino's Fame in the Harvey-Nashe Pamphlet War

In Geoffrey Chaucer's *The House of Fame* (c.1380) the narrator discovers a temple to Fame built on top of a cliff made of ice, and etched into that cliff, the names of the famous. While the names which remained in the shade have been preserved, he notices that on the side exposed to the sun the names have "molte away . . . So unfamous was woxe hir fame."[1] Chaucer's image of once famous names melting away due to their exposure brings into focus the paradox at the heart of this essay: posthumous fame depends on the material survival of a writer's work and its ability to inspire subsequent commentary by others, but this greater exposure simultaneously increases the likelihood that the writer's fame will become distorted from over-use.

Writing almost two hundred years later, the Elizabethan satirist Thomas Nashe realized that this phenomenon was only going to be exacerbated by a reliance on print, which like Chaucer's ice was equal parts durable and ephemeral. On the one hand, print's ability to preserve fame was now open even to those "Masterlesse men" that posted advertisements in St Paul's Churchyard, or the "Knight Marshal men, that naile vp Mandates at the Court gat, for annoying the Pallace with filth or making water" who Nashe jokingly fears "will shortly make vp the number of the learned men of our time, and be as famous as the rest."[2] The ease of putting writing into print,

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1. Geoffrey Chaucer, "The House of Fame," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1988), ll:1145–46.

2. Thomas Nashe, "Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Devil," *Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (1904–10; rpt. Oxford, 1958), I:194–95. Subsequent references to Nashe will be from this edition.

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it seemed, opened up the market for fame to anyone. On the other hand, Nashe seems to fear that in this flood of print it would become harder for readers to distinguish good writing from bad, and increase the chance that good work would go unnoticed. His own writing may become so undervalued as literature that it would become literally not worth the paper it was printed on, recycled instead as "wast paper" used to "drie and kindle Tobacco" or "wrap veluet pantofles . . . so they bee not woe begone at the heeles" (*Unfortunate Traveller*, II:207).

Nashe's concerns with the unreliability of print came to a head in a prolonged attack on his greatest rival, Gabriel Harvey, titled *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* (1596). In the opening to this text, Nashe's interlocutors criticize him for having remained silent for three years, and in that time allowing Harvey to have the last word of their ongoing pamphlet war. If Nashe were to refuse to publish his response, then he envisions a scenario where Harvey's negative representation of Nashe as "an Oratour of the stewes [and] a Poet of Bedlam"[3] would be republished by unscrupulous printers for generations, while his own point of view would go unheard, to the detriment of his reputation:

> To be a villaine in print . . . is an attainder that will sticke by thee for ever. A blot of ignomie it is, which though this age, or, at the utmost, such in this age as have converst or are aquainted with thee, hold light and ridiculous . . . yet there is an age to come, which, knowing neither thee [Nashe] nor him [Harvey], but by your severall workes judging either, will authorise all hee hath belched forth in thy reproach for sound Gospell . . . thou holding thy peace, and not confuting him, seemes to confesse and confirme all whereof hee hath accused thee, and the innocent, unheard, doo perish as guilty. (III:27)

Nashe here identifies a problem for the author at the end of the sixteenth century. Print technology had increased the potential for a writer's work to be reproduced at volume. A greater number of writers could now justifiably think of their writing being read not only by their immediate contemporaries, but also by later generations. The problem was that this distancing between author and reader necessitated intervention by other, unknowable, intermediaries. Not only might the original context be lost (for example, Nashe's mock-fear that ephemera such as adverts and warn-

3. Gabriel Harvey, *Pierces Supererogation or, A New Prayse of the Old Asse* (1593), 23.

ing signs would become so detached from their immediate significance that they would ultimately be understood as scholarship) but the more sinister possibility of "vanishing mediation" may occur, namely that through the willful or accidental silencing of some texts and the proliferation of others, a jaundiced view of an author may be handed down to later readers as a true representation.

"Vanishing mediation," a term originally defined by Fredric Jameson and later developed by Slavoj Žižek, describes a dual process which negotiates a transformation between two opposing concepts. Importantly, after this transformation has been achieved and the secondary meaning has become successful, the act of interpretation then disappears, leaving no trace of intervention behind so that the opposite concept appears to have existed from the very beginning.[4] An interpretation of the past succeeds if it is accepted as the most likely version of events, but at the same time it loses its very definition as "interpretation" once it becomes known by the majority of a community as a factual description of the past.

In the same way, Nashe was concerned with what would happen to his authorial identity if the interpretation of his greatest rival was taken as "sound Gospell" leaving him to be considered retrospectively "guilty." Nashe knew that there was a literary precedent for exactly this form of transformation of a once famous wit into a notorious villain: Pietro Aretino, a financially successful and famous author, whose reputation plummeted after his death in 1556 to the extent that his works in their entirety were banned throughout Catholic Europe, while he was demonized as a pornographer and heretic.

Aretino would become a totemic figure for both Nashe and Harvey, who used his fate to illustrate their primary argument: the moral responsibility, or lack thereof, of a published author. Was it appropriate, argued Harvey, for Nashe to market his authorial prose style (that most identifiable and commercial feature of one's writing) if that style was inspired by a notorious writer such as Aretino? The pamphlet war that resulted was a key event of the late Elizabethan period, not only because it helped to define a more aggressive and imaginative form of satire on both the page and stage, but also because it marked a significant development in the way in which authorial identity would be defined at the turn of the century. In this

4. See Frederic Jameson, "The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber," *New German Critique* 1 (1973), 52–89, and Slavoj Žižek, *For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London, 2002).

respect, Aretino became not just one example of an immoral writer for Harvey to compare to Nashe, but a prototypical professional writer Nashe could use to express concern that his own posthumous reputation would be similarly mishandled. The presentation of authorial personae and the line between public and private selves had been at the center of their quarrel, initiated by Harvey's anger at their contemporary Robert Greene for mocking Harvey's family in *Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592) and Nashe's own anger at Harvey's defamation of the recently deceased Greene as a dissolute writer. At the start of the quarrel, Aretino's name had appeared as one in a list of many other questionable satirists to whom Harvey compared Greene, but by its end his importance to the debate had grown, as evidenced by the amount of sustained comparisons between Nashe and Aretino in Harvey's *Pierces Supererogation* (1593). This literary quarrel about authorial reputations would be unexpectedly continued in Nashe's mock travel narrative *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) in which Nashe would discuss Aretino's contested reputation, defending him from his detractors' accusations of immorality.

II

In his discussion of the Harvey-Nashe quarrel, David McPherson points out that the two writers "mention Aretino with remarkable frequency, and their contrasting attitudes toward him illustrate clearly the differences in the rhetorical strategies they chose to adopt in the quarrel."[5] Indeed, Pietro Aretino was the perfect example for an argument over authorial identity: he was one of the first vernacular writers to make a living from the printing press, and was known across Europe by the sobriquet "scourge of princes" thanks to his reputation for publishing witty letters of malediction to his patrons.[6] He was a prodigious writer, with 151 editions of his work published in his lifetime, and he relentlessly publicized his own work and those of his friends.[7] Aretino had, as Harald Hendrix puts it, "a revolutionary insight" that by promoting an image of himself as a naturally talented writer who had the ear of powerful men such as Charles V,

5. David C. McPherson, "Aretino and the Harvey-Nashe Quarrel," *PMLA* 84 (1969), 1551–58 (1551).

6. Aretino's self-promotion is explored in Raymond Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr: Sexuality, Satire and Self-Projection in Sixteenth-Century Literature and Art* (Toronto, 2004).

7. See Amedeo Quondam, "Aretino e il libro: Un repertorio, per una bibliografia," in *Pietro Aretino nel cinquecentenario della nascita* (Rome, 1995), I:197–230.

he could "effectively construc[t] his own image in order to capitalise on it."[8]

His books spread across Continental Europe, as a letter sent to Aretino from one of his followers in Rouen demonstrates: "I swear to your lordship that I do not go into a place where I do not find some of your works on the table, and I do not speak with a man who knows that I am an Italian without his asking after the divine Aretino."[9] However, Aretino's reputation began to unravel when his works were placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* in 1559. No longer associated with an acerbic form of social satire, Aretino became synonymous in Catholic Europe with vices such as pornography and atheism.

The turn against Aretino took longer to take hold in Protestant England. Aretino was initially presented as a humanist unfairly maligned by his own countrymen well into the 1580s, when the London publisher John Wolfe printed new editions of Aretino's dialogues and comedies between 1584 and 1589.[10] In one of Wolfe's prefaces, Aretino is presented as a wrongfully censored author who was in fact a "great friend of free men, mortal enemy of crooked necks, great lover of knowledge, cruel adversary of ignorance, follower of virtue, and bitter castigator of vices."[11] Although these editions were intended to be smuggled back to Italy and sold under the counter, they were also read by curious Englishmen back home. According to Gabriel Harvey, students at Cambridge University had been immersing themselves in his work since the late 1570s: "over-

8. Harald Hendrix, "The Construction of an Author: Pietro Aretino and the Elizabethans," in *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway, and Helen Wilcox (Basingstoke; New York, 2000), 31–44 (40).

9. Giuseppe Orologi to Aretino (Rouen, October 13, 1550), quoted in Élise Boillet, *L'Arétin e la Bible* (Geneva, 2007), 24n59. English translation in *Works of Aretino*, ed. Samuel Putnam (Chicago, 1926), II:284.

10. These are *La prima parte de Ragionamenti di M. Pietro Aretino, cognominato il Flagello de prencipi, il Veritiero, e'l Divino* (1584), *Quattro Comedie del divino Pietro Aretino* (1588), and *La terza, et ultima parte de Ragionamenti del divino Pietro Aretino* (1589). On Wolfe's editions, see Kate De Rycker, "The Italian Job: John Wolfe, Giacomo Castelvetro and Printing Pietro Aretino," *Specialist Markets in the Early Modern Book World*, ed. Richard Kirwan and Sophie Mullins (Leiden, 2015), 240–56; Bianca Finzi-Contini Calabresi, "'Bawdy-Doubles': Pietro Aretino's *Comedie* (1588) and the Appearance of English Drama," in *Renaissance Drama: Italy in the Drama of Europe*, ed. Albert Russel Ascoli and William N. West, vols. 36/37 (Chicago, 2010), 207–36; Sonia Massai, "John Wolfe and the Impact of Exemplary Go-Betweens on Early Modern Print Culture," in *Renaissance Go-Betweens: Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andreas Höfele and Werner von Koppenfels (Berlin, 2005), 104–18.

11. "Il Barbagrigia" preface, *La prima parte de Ragionamenti*, A2v. Translation my own.

many [are] acquainted with Unico [sic] Aretino."[12] Harvey himself wrote admiringly of Aretino, declaring in one marginal note that "Aretines glory, to be himself: to speake, & write like himself: to imitate none, but him selfe & ever to maintaine his owne singularity," while in another note he praises Aretino's satire which "In deriving mens opinions, and frustrating the most probable expectation; Unico [sic] Aretino superexcellent . . . Without any offence, & with many delights."[13]

However, by the early 1590s the English opinion of Aretino had begun to sour. Although Aretino was still acknowledged as a writer who had made a living from print, the fact that his more famous dialogues were written from the perspective of courtesans meant that Aretino's professional success was understood to be due to his erotic writing rather than his religious texts which in the 1540s had been adapted by the English poet Thomas Wyatt and translated into French by Jean de Vauzelles.[14] If we look at a selection of references to Aretino from the 1590s, we can see that his name was becoming used as a metonym for Italianate lasciviousness. In Robert Greene's cony-catching pamphlet *The Black Bookes Messenger* (1592), a con artist describes how one might gain the confidence of victims: "If he be lasciuiously addicted, they haue *Aretines* Tables at their fingers endes, to feed him on with new kind of filthiness."[15] In John Dickenson's *Greene in Conceipt* (1598), in which the ghost of Greene appears in a dream, the narrator considers whether to ask Greene about hell and "whether it be likewise true that *Aretine* hangs by the tongue for hauing blabb'd abroade the secrets of dame Lecheries dearlings."[16] Aretino's characters were also used as a shorthand for Italian corruption. In Thomas Lodge's *Margarite of America* (1596) the corrupt courtier, Arsadachus, is described as "delighted rather to flatter than counsel, to feed corruptions than purge them, who had Machevil's prince in his bosom to give instance and mother Nana, the Italian bawd, in his pocket to show his artificial villain-

12. Gabriel Harvey to Edmund Spenser, as printed in *Three Proper, and Wittie, Familiar Letters* (1580), 28.

13. Quoted in Virginia F. Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: His Life, Marginalia, and Library* (Oxford, 1979), 175–76.

14. Thomas Wyatt's adaptation of Aretino's *Sette Salmi della Penitenza di David* (1527) is discussed in Susan Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt: The Heart's Forest* (London, 2012), 451–83. On de Vauzelles' translation of Aretino's religious writing, see Élise Boillet, *L'Arétin e la Bible* (Geneva, 2007) and Elsa Kammerer, *Jean de Vauzelles et le creuset Lyonnais* (Geneva, 2013).

15. Robert Greene, *The Blacke Bookes Messenger* (1592), C3v.

16. John Dickenson, *Greene in Conceipt* (1598), A4v.

ies."[17] Although Machiavelli is named as the writer of *The Prince*, "mother Nana" refers to the central character of Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, as a woman who has held successive positions as a degenerate nun, a cheating wife, and a shrewd prostitute.

Sensing the growing distaste, Wolfe abandoned his plans to publish Aretino's collected letters, despite having entered them in the Stationers' Register twice in September and October 1588.[18] Instead his publications post 1591 capture the growing mood of anti-Italian and anti-immigrant sentiment. John Eliot's *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593), for example, parodied the conversation manuals of refugee language teachers such as John Florio's *First Fruits* (1578).[19] In one part of Eliot's mock-dialogue an interlocutor says that "London is ful of Italians and Frenchmen" who are "a little too high minded, and doe not fit themselues long to the nature of vs English." Not only does Eliot accuse immigrants of not "fitting themselves" to English life, but worse, they bring poisonous foreign books into the country:

> There are some wicked heads . . . who have empoysoned by the venime of their skill, our English nation, with the bookes of Nicholas Machiavell, and Peter Aretine, replenished with all filthinesse and vilanie, who deserve for their pains a few swings of the strapado, or some bastinadoes, and to be banished out of the kingdome of England.[20]

One such "wicked head" who brought the works of Aretino and Machiavelli to English readers was Eliot's own publisher John Wolfe, who went on to publish Gabriel Harvey's pamphlets. Despite praising Aretino's singularity in his private notes, Harvey publicly denounced the Italian, writing in *Pierces Supererogation* that Aretino was a "Prodigall sonne of conceit" and an "immortall Diuell of all Vice" (177, 175).

Despite the growing association between Aretino and foreign lechery, there still remained a few writers who defended Aretino's reputation as a gifted writer. Florio, seemingly undeterred by John Eliot's mockery, de-

17. Thomas Lodge, *A Margarite of America*, ed. Henry D. Janzen (Toronto, 2005), 92.

18. This project had been promised in the preface to *La terza, et ultima parte de Ragionamenti*. The anonymous writer, most likely Wolfe's editor Giacomo Castelvetro, writes that "all six books of such Letters in one folio volume, adding two other books of beautiful letters of many noble and serious characters written to him" (p. 3). Translation my own.

19. Frances Yates, *John Florio: The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge, Eng., 1934), 154–64.

20. John Eliot, *Ortho-epia Gallica: Eliots Fruits for the French* (1593), 4.

scribed Aretino in the dedicatory letter to his Italian dictionary *A World of Wordes* (1598) as a creator of neologisms and a writer whose wit ranged across a variety of literary genres.[21] Thomas Nashe shared Florio's admiration for Aretino as a stylist, and would become known as Aretino's chief defender in a decade when the English were thinking of this once famous writer primarily as a symbol of lechery. Thomas Lodge, for example, notes Nashe's stylistic connection to Aretino when he describes Nashe as a "true English Aretine" in 1596. Lodge employs the label in a list of writers and their literary strengths (John Lyly: "facility in discourse"; Edmund Spenser: "best read in ancient Poetry"; Samuel Daniel: "choice in word, and invention"; Michael Drayton: "diligent and formall"), so Nashe's moniker as a "true English Aretine" seems initially a positive description.[22] Yet considering Aretino's ambiguous reputation as a prose stylist, an erotic writer, and an acerbic satirist, Lodge's description could also be read as a warning that while Nashe's style had the satirical edge associated with Aretino, this boldness may come at a price.

Nashe clearly admired his Italian predecessor's audacity, writing that "He was no timerous servile flatterer of the commonwealth wherein he lived . . . Princes hee spard not, that in the least point transgrest. His lyfe he contemned in comparison of the libertie of speech" (*Unfortunate Traveller*, II:265). Nashe here echoes the claims made in the preface of Wolfe's 1584 edition of Aretino's dialogues, namely that he was a defender of free speech and an exposer of hypocrites.[23] Nashe's first mention of Aretino appears in *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Devil* (1592) in a remark against the meanness of patrons: "We want an Aretine here among us that might strip these golden asses out of their gay trappings, and after he had ridden them to death with railing, leave them on the dunghill for carrion" (I:242). The implication, as noted by Gabriel Harvey, was that Nashe was positioning himself as that English successor to the Italian satirist: "a braue spirite to bee employed with his stripping instrument, in supply of that onely want of a diuine Aretine, the great rider of golden Asses . . . Lord, what an egregious Aretine should we shortly haue: how excessiuely exceeding

21. John Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes: A Critical Edition*, intro. Hermann W. Haller (Toronto, 2013), 5.

22. Thomas Lodge, *Wits Miserie, and the Worlds Madnesse: Discovering the Devils Incarnate of this Age* (1596), 57.

23. Given the censorship of most Continental editions of Aretino, it seems more likely that Nashe would have read Aretino in Italian through Wolfe's editions.

Aretine himselfe" (18). When Harvey is claiming that Nashe may "excessively exceed Aretino," he is referring not to the content of Aretino's works, but to his amplified and aggressive style which Nashe was hoping could be adapted to make his own satirical prose memorable.

Most modern criticism on the English reception of Aretino has noted that Nashe was a literary outlier in his continued admiration of the Italian writer, despite the cultural turn against Aretino in the 1590s.[24] Complicating this issue, Nashe's alignment with Aretino has also been read as an attempt to claim a stylistic advantage over his rival writers. Aretino may have been identified as a pornographer, but he was also known to have grown wealthy as a commentator on social mores, someone who in his own time "should be able to wield [influence] on the formation of public opinion and public taste."[25] Public taste may have been considerably less liberal in late Elizabethan England than it was in the Republic of Venice in the 1530s, yet as Wes Folkerth points out, what Nashe shared with Aretino was an awareness that the distance between themselves as print authors and their unknowable public audience needed to be overcome. In order to bridge that gap, both writers developed a conversational style to make themselves appear more sympathetic to their anonymous audience.

Aretino's chatty but charged style inspired Nashe's own writing as he acknowledges in his mock encomium *Lenten Stuffe* (1599): "of all stiles I most affect & strive to imitate *Aretines*, not caring for this demure soft *mediocre genus*, that is like water and wine mixt togither, but give me pure wine of itself, & that begets good bloud, and heates the braine thorowly" (III:152).[26] Aretino had himself equated his own intensity of expression with authorial and social power. As Neil Rhodes writes, Nashe admired not only "the violent edge of eloquence" that Aretino's vivid style conjured up, but also his pose as a virtuoso writer: "Everywhere [Nashe's] obsession with his own stylistic virtuosity testifies to the fact that his self-sufficiency is guaranteed only by the power of his pen, and it is this fact which leads to

24. See Maria Concolato Palermo, "Aretino nella letteratura inglese del Cinquecento," in *Pietro Aretino nel cinquecentenario dalla nascita* (Rome, 2000), I:471–78, and Raymond Waddington, "*Volpone*: Aretino's Venice, Jonson's Aretino," in *Pietro Aretino: Subverting the System in Renaissance Italy* (Aldershot, 2014), ch. 10, 1–24.

25. Wes Folkerth, "Pietro Aretino, Thomas Nashe, and Early Modern Rhetorics of Public Address," in *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe*: *People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, ed. Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin (Abingdon, 2010), 68–78.

26. On Nashe and Aretino's shared interest in the grotesque, see Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque* (London, 1980), 26–36.

his adulation of Aretino."[27] A writer, Nashe realized, was remembered for their style rather than for what they wrote. Ian Frederick Moulton suggests that Nashe was using the same shock tactics as Aretino, namely his mix of "political authority and disorderly eroticism" as authorial practice, and a strategy for gaining literary and social power.[28] Moulton points out that Aretino's model of scandalous authorship did not work for Nashe, given the sociological differences between pre-Tridentine Venice and Elizabethan England. Instead of becoming rich through scandalizing his readers, "Nashe faced accusations of being—at least figuratively—a male whore."[29]

Although Moulton is primarily concerned with the connection between Aretino and Nashe's erotic writing and its relation to their shared authorial strategies, at the center of his analogy between prostitution and authorship is the question of commodification. What happens to an author's reputation when they are both the producer and commodity of their work? As Raymond Waddington and Moulton have argued, Aretino was an example to his fellow writers of how they could commodify both their books and themselves as public personalities.[30] Waddington sums up the appeal of Aretino to his fellow Italian "poligrafi" (professional writers): "He chose to emphasize the character of the writer above the individual writings, projecting for himself consistently the identity of a satirist."[31]

Aretino's strategy of commodifying his authorial persona is equally apparent in the authorial tactics of English writers of the late Elizabethan period. Many critics have convincingly argued that the distinction between authors and their books was increasingly blurred, from the success of John Lyly's character Euphues and his distinctive prose style, to the association of Nashe with his satirical persona, Pierce Penilesse.[32] Douglas Bruster con-

27. Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1992), 29–30.

28. Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), 31.

29. Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 165. Maria Teresa Micaela Prendergast also discusses Harvey and Nashe's accusations of promiscuity in "Promiscuous Textualities: The Nashe-Harvey Controversy and the Unnatural Productions of Print," in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks (Aldershot, 2005), 173–96.

30. "Because Aretino . . . enjoyed a level of personal power and social influence almost unprecedented among sixteenth-century men of letters, he offered a compelling model for Elizabethan writers who, like Nashe and the young Ben Jonson, had difficulty negotiating the uncertainties of the patronage system and the emerging book market": Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 109.

31. Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, 92.

32. Among many others: Lawrence Manley, "'To be a man in print': Pamphlet Morals and Urban Culture," in *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, Eng., 1995), 297–371;

cludes that authors' writing style, their literary characters and satirical personae, ultimately become interpreted as the embodied presence of the author themselves, while Steve Mentz notes a telling increase in metaphors which refer to the book as a prosthetic extension of the writer, especially in the work of Nashe.[33]

The end of the Elizabethan period saw a generation of writers who were responding to the economic pressures of the print market by developing ways to promote and commodify themselves as authors. The fallout from the death of Robert Greene in 1592 was a warning to his contemporaries, and showed them what could happen when a famous author lost control over his public persona. As Nashe observes in his prefatory letter to *Pierce Penilesse*, after Greene's death there was a boom in pamphlets which appropriated Greene's authorial persona and were written from the perspective of his ghost.[34] To be "a man in print" as Thomas Dekker significantly termed it, was to blur the boundary between oneself as a writer and as a fictional creation.[35] The disembodied persona then gained its own agency independent of its author, a process which could continue and become exaggerated after his death.

Out of this generation of English writers it was Nashe who was the most overtly concerned with the writer's lack of control over his posthumous reception. It was also Nashe who, despite having profited from the commodification of his own persona, would refer to Aretino in *The Unfortunate Traveller* as an emblematic figure of corrupted fame, brought low by controversies which had built up after his death. Nashe knew that a reputation like Aretino's was to a large extent manufactured by others who had censored, expunged, translated, and commented on his work, and in the process often made their intervention appear to "vanish." For example, Wolfe's London edition of Aretino, *La prima parte de ragionamenti di M. Pietro Aretino*

Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Eng., 1997); Andy Kesson, "Euph culture: Lyly, *Euphues* and the market for single-story books (1578–94)," in *John Lyly and Early Modern Authorship* (Manchester, 2015), 67–100; Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes, eds., *Writing Robert Greene: Essays on England's First Notorious Professional Writer* (Aldershot, 2008).

33. Douglas Bruster, "The Structural Transformation of Print in Late Elizabethan England," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Culture: Early Modern Literature and the Cultural Turn* (Basingstoke, 2003), 65–93; Steve Mentz, "Day Labor: The Practice of Prose in Early Modern England," in *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, ed. Naomi Conn Liebler (London, 2007), 18–32.

34. Nashe refers to this in *Pierce Penilesse*, I:153. On the appropriation of Greene as a ghost writer, see Samuel Fallon, "Robert Greene's Ghosts," *Modern Language Quarterly* 77 (2016), 193–217.

35. Thomas Dekker, *1603. The Wonderfull Yeare* (1603), A3.

(1584) insisted that this new edition restored the dialogues to the way Aretino had originally "composed them, and in the same manner that he had intended of the first imprint."[36] Despite this claim to be restoring the text according to the author's wishes, the Wolfe press in fact helped to perpetuate the attribution to Aretino of an otherwise anonymous and misogynistic dialogue on prostitutes, *Ragionamento del Zoppino* (1539), by including it in their edition and presenting it as a continuation of his *Ragionamenti*.[37]

In the centuries after both Aretino and Nashe's deaths, Aretino's reputation would be remolded multiple times in order to serve new purposes in a process of "vanished mediation." For example, Aretino's moniker as the "scourge of princes" was originally used to describe his notorious baiting of the powerful: "ecco il flagello / De principi, il divin Pietro Aretin" (see the scourge / of princes, the divine Pietro Aretino).[38] Over a century later a Dutch text *De Dwaelende Hoer* (*The Wandering Whore*, c.1668) is not only misattributed to Aretino, but repurposes his moniker as *de GEESEL der VORSTEN, ende de WRAECKE GODTS* (*the SCOURGE of PRINCES, showing the REVENGE of GOD*). The preface exacerbates this new definition of "scourge of princes":

> Yes, one must acknowledge with sadness, that we should have a need here for a new Aretine, to describe ever more new cursed findings . . . You now have here in our language his Wandering WHORE, in which he introduces two of the filthiest, nastiest and most miserable Creatures.[39]

Unlike Nashe, who had wished for an English Aretine "that might strip these golden asses" (i.e. patrons), the Dutch translator's wish for a "new Aretin" is instead to shame "the filthiest, nastiest and most miserable Creatures" (i.e. prostitutes). Thanks to this and similar transformations of the

36. "Il Barbagrigia" preface, *La prima parte de Ragionamenti*, A2. Translation my own.

37. Though possibly a misattribution, it is an understandable one as the *Zoppino* dialogue had originally been published together with *Il Dialogo nel quale la Nanna insegna a la Pippa* by Francesco Marcolini (Venice, 1539). For a modern translation, see Duncan Salkeld and Ana Garcia Herraez, "History, Genre and Sexuality in the Sixteenth Century: The Zoppino Dialogue Attributed to Pietro Aretino," *Mediterranean Studies* 10 (2001), 49–116.

38. Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, 3rd ed. (Ferrara, 1532), canto 46, l.14.

39. [Romeyn de Hooghe?], *De Dwaelende Hoer* (c.1668, edition now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Rem.IV 404), 2. In the original Dutch: "jaa men moet zelfs met droefheydt bekennen, dat hier wel een nieuwen Aretin zoude van nooden weesen, om ons meerder en nieuwer vervloeckte vonden te beschrijven . . . Gy hebt dan nu hier in onse taal sijn Dwaelende HOER. Waar in hy ont twee vande vuilste, verachtste ende ellendigste Schepselen in voert." Translation my own.

term "scourge of princes," Aretino was reinterpreted as speaking on behalf of princes, rather than shaming or blackmailing them for their hypocrisies.

When translators or editors covered over these acts of mediation, new readers were encouraged to believe that their presentation of Aretino as a scourge of courtesans predated the act of translation. What continued to exist of Aretino was the outside form while the content was transformed within its parameters, like a parasite which feeds on the body of its host and leaves only the husk behind. Initially the content of Aretino was transformed for reasons of morality and new literary tastes, but by the seventeenth century buzzwords such as "wandering whores" and "Aretine's postures" negated any original content, having needed only the name of "Aretino" to publicize associated erotic material. Such mediation gave the appearance that Aretino had indeed "always been" one of his various simplified reputations: had always been a pornographer, had always been a scourge of courtesans, had always been a heretic.

III

In order to understand why Nashe and Harvey used Aretino to direct their discussion of authorial identity and its relationship to print, it is first necessary to explain how a combination of censorship and cheap print helped to transform Aretino's reputation. The mythologizing of Aretino had already begun in his lifetime. In fact "Aretino" was not even his real name. Pietro had been born to a cobbler, Luca del Tura, and Margherita "Tita" Bonci, who had once been an artist's model.[40] As was common in the period Pietro took the name of his home town, Arezzo, as did the poet Bernardo Accolti who, also a native of Arezzo, was known as "Unico Aretino." Their shared moniker proved to be confusing for Pietro's later English reader Gabriel Harvey, who referred to him as "Unico Aretino," unwittingly associating Pietro with his compatriot's reputation for extemporal invention.[41]

It would prove fitting that Pietro should choose such an unstable surname. Over time, his name became a transferable phenomenon, so that much like the transformation of "Machiavelli" into "Machiavellian," the term "Aretine" could be used to describe other people or actions. Aretino was aware of this phenomenon, in one letter boasting of his fame:

40. See Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, xx. There were also rumors, stoked by Aretino himself, that he was the illegitimate son of a local nobleman, Luigi Bacci, and that his mother was a courtesan.

41. See Gabriel Harvey, *Pierces Supererogation*, 10; *Three Proper, and Wittie, Familiar Letters*, 28; Stern, *Gabriel Harvey*, 175.

> As much as may have reached your ears, you have not heard the half of my fame. Medals are coined in my honour; medals of gold, silver, brass, lead, of stucco. My features are carved along the fronts of palaces. My portrait is stamped on comb-cases, engraved on mirror-handles, painted on majolica . . . some kind of glass they make at Murano are called Aretines. Aretine is the name given to a breed of horses, after one that Pope Clement sent me, and which I gave to Duke Federico. They have christened the little canal that runs beside my house upon the Canalozzo, Rio Aretino.[42]

While it might be expected that the street where he lived would be named after him, it is the instances of objects with only a passing connection to Aretino that show how transferrable his name and persona had become at the height of his fame. This gap between the author and his reputation would widen after his death, until by the eighteenth century, French books detailing erotic exploits were given titles such as *L'Aretin François* (1787) and *L'Aretin d'Augustin Carrache* (1798). "L'Aretin" no longer referred to a Tuscan town or to an individual writer, but to a genre of erotic engravings.[43] *L'Aretin d'Augustin Carrache*, for example, was based on a series of engravings by Agostino Carracci named *Gli amori degli dei* which were produced in the 1590s, forty years after Aretino's death. That Aretino came to have this series of engravings attributed to him is illustrative of how often texts and images espousing unconventional sexual or religious ideas were attributed to his name.

Carracci's series was inspired by an earlier set of erotic images which were in one way connected to Aretino. *I Modi* (1524), a series of sixteen sexual positions by the artist Giulio Romano, had originally been painted on the walls of the summer palace of Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. Romano belonged to the Roman workshop of Raphael, where it was common practice for the engraver Marcantonio Raimondi to produce prints of the workshop's paintings and for these to be subsequently sold to the public. However, given the sexual nature of this series, the Papal Court demanded that the plates be destroyed and Raimondi (not, notably, the artist Romano) sent to prison. Ultimately Raimondi was freed, and Aretino would later say that he had helped to secure the engraver's

42. Pietro Aretino to Juneo Petreo, in *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Pietro Aretino: Lettere*, ed. Paolo Procaccioli (Rome, 2002), III:145. Translation my own.

43. On these and the pseudo-Aretine genre of erotic writing, see James Grantham Turner, *Schooling Sex: Libertine Literature and Erotic Education in Italy, France, and England 1534–1685* (Oxford, 2003).

release. After this incident Aretino wrote a series of sonnets inspired by the images, the *Sonetti Lussuriosi* (c.1527), which gave voice to the characters depicted in the original paintings. The order of events is uncertain due to the wholesale censorship of the images, but at some point between 1527 and 1550 a printed booklet was produced which contained woodcut copies of *I Modi* with the relevant Aretino sonnet printed underneath each image.[44]

The title-page of the one surviving copy of this booklet has been removed, but given the combination of the papal ban on the images and what we know of Aretino's strategies of self-promotion, a possible scenario is that Aretino, rather than Romano or Raimondi, was the only name associated with this booklet. A combination of a named textual writer and an anonymous visual artist would explain why later readers would believe that it was Aretino who was the creator of the entire series, words and pictures alike. This collapsing of textual and visual authorship is apparent in later English references to "Aretine's Postures" in Jacobean plays such as Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) when the audience hears of "a room fill'd all with Aretine's pictures, / More than the twice twelve labours of luxury," and in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1606) where Lady Would-Be (attempting to imitate the manners of fashionable Venetian courtesans) includes Aretino in her reading-list: "there's Aretine! Only, his pictures are a little obscene."[45] Aretino's role as the textual interpreter of these images effectively vanished, and he became known as an artist of erotica.

Anonymous dialogues on prostitution were also misattributed to Aretino because he had written two popular dialogues *Il Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia* (1534) and its continuation *Il Dialogo nel quale la Nanna insegna a la Pippa* (1536) in which Nanna recollects her career as a nun, a wife, and a courtesan. These dialogues were written from a relatively sympathetic perspective for a Renaissance male writer ventriloquizing a female protagonist. The texts justify Nanna's deception by showing the often violent and possessive treatment of prostitutes by their male clients. An earlier di-

44. For the images and a detailed history of *I Modi* and Aretino's part in it, see Lynne Lawner, *I Modi: The Sixteen Pleasures: Erotic Album of the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1988) and Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (New Jersey, 2001); James Grantham Turner, "Woodcut Copies of the Modi," *Print Quarterly* 26 (2009), 115–22.

45. Thomas Middleton, "A Game at Chess (a later form)," ed. Gary Taylor, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, gen. ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), 2.2.255. Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, in *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford, 1995), 3.4.96–97.

alogue *La Puttana Errante* (c.1530) which details the life story of the sexually voracious Maddalena was mistakenly attributed to Aretino because of its generic similarity. It was actually written by Niccolò Franco, once a literary secretary to Aretino and later one of his bitterest adversaries. As with the case of *I Modi*, by the late sixteenth century the attribution to Aretino had stuck. John Florio lists it as "La P. Errante del'Aretino" in the index to his Italian dictionary *A World of Wordes*, while a copy owned by Thomas Barlow, the librarian of the Bodleian in the 1650s, is titled "La Puttana Errante, overo Dialogo, di Madalena è Giulia di Pietro Aretino."[46]

The misattribution of *La Puttana Errante*, which was decidedly less sympathetic to its female characters, helped to exaggerate the metonymic association between Aretino and pornography. Through the act of vanished mediation, later translators, editors, and commentators made Aretino into an icon with "affective presence," as Bryan Reynolds terms a "combined material, symbolic, and imaginary existence."[47] Once Aretino's celebrity had become more important than his writing, it became easier to attribute works to him that he never wrote, but which seemed to the attributer to be "Aretino-ish." This is a shift in grammar: Aretino had stopped being a subject, and had instead become an adjective, something detachable from the man himself, and compact enough to give an additional layer of meaning to anything erotic.

It should be noted that Aretino had not lived a spotless existence as a public figure, and indeed he was accused of deviant sexual proclivities by former colleagues who had turned against him. Niccolò Franco, the likely author of *La Puttana Errante*, declared in his *Vita di Pietro Aretino* (1538) that Aretino was a sodomite, while fellow "poligrafo" Anton Francesco Doni named Aretino the "Colossus, bestial Antichrist of our age."[48] In the same text, *Il Terremoto* (1556), Doni implied that Aretino's lifestyle and his writing were inter-related: "You write badly, live worse, and with your Pippa and Nanna, and dirty courtesans."[49] Although it took longer for Aretino's reputation as a witty satirist to fade in England, eventually Doni's accusa-

46. Barlow's copy of *La Puttana Errante* is now held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. MS. F.9 (5) Linc.

47. Bryan Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, 2002), 6.

48. For more on these texts and Aretino's response, see David O. Frantz, *Festum Voluptatis: A Study of Renaissance Erotica* (Columbus, 1989), 110–17. For more on the "poligrafi" see Paul F. Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530–1560: Anton Francesco Doni, Nicolò Franco & Ortensio Lando* (Madison, 1969).

49. Anton Francesco Doni, *Il Terremoto*, quoted in Frantz, 114.

tion that Aretino wrote "badly" and lived "worse" would become a refrain used not only to denigrate Aretino, but as a way to express concern over the immoral effect that other writers had over their readership. Just as Doni had done for Aretino, Harvey concluded that Nashe's exaggerated rhetoric was indicative of uncontrolled behavior, and vice versa: "His Life daily feedeth his Stile; & his stile notoriously bewraieth his Life" (42).

The connection between prose style and the morality of the author was one of the primary areas of disagreement between Nashe and Harvey in their literary quarrel, and one not restricted to their discussion of Aretino. In his opening salvo, Harvey had compared Nashe to the stage clown Richard Tarlton, dismissing Nashe's bestselling *Pierce Penilesse* as "the very timpanie of his Tarltonizing wit."[50] The implication was that Nashe's style had broken with decorum by transferring the extemporal and exaggerated tone of the stage clown onto the printed page.[51] Nashe responded by simultaneously trying to distance his writing from the seedy association with the stage, while acknowledging his project to apply the effective techniques of drama (which were, incidentally, also Aretino's techniques) of direct address, a conversational and digressive tone, meta-literary self-consciousness, and the enjoyment of word-play to his own prose: "what blemish is it to *Pierce Penilesse* to begin where the Stage doth ende, to build vertue a Church on that foundation that the Devill built his Chappell?" (*Strange Newes*, I:305).

Harvey would again emphasize a connection between style and notoriety when writing about Nashe's similarities to Aretino while, once again, Nashe maintained that there was a clear separation between the two. Harvey interpreted Nashe's stated admiration for Aretino's prose style as an admission that Nashe shared Aretino's lax sexual morals. In *Pierces Supererogation* Harvey lists humanist authorities who had elsewhere described Aretino as "the most-impudent Ribald, that euer tooke penne in hand [and] the Ring leader of the corruptest bawdes, and miscreantest rakehells in Italy" (176). While Joachim Perion and Torquato Tasso are quoted as being dismayed by the "precepts," "examples" and "singularity" of Aretino's writing, the majority of the quotations are moral judgements: Aretino's writing is "foul," "reprobate," "insolent and insupportable," and these

50. Gabriel Harvey, *Four Letters*, B2.

51. See also Karen Kettnich, "Nashe's Extemporal Vein and His Tarltonizing Wit," in *The Age of Thomas Nashe: Texts, Bodies and Trespasses of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Stephen Guy-Bray, Joan Pong Linton, and Steve Mentz (Farnham, 2013), 99–114.

qualities are indicative of his lifestyle, which is "monstrous" and "sodomitical." For Nashe to model his prose style on Aretino would only help to spread the Italian's immorality in England. Better "the dogges-meate of Agrippa" writes Harvey, "than the goates-meate of Arretine," expanding his digestive metaphor to describe the infectiousness of Aretino and Nashe's writing: "Cannot an Italian ribald, vomit-out the infectious poyson of the world, but an Inglishe horrel-lorrel must licke it up for a restorative; and attempt to putrefy gentle mindes, with the vilest impostumes of lewde corruption?" (45).

Harvey and his brother, the theologian Richard Harvey, repeatedly warned their readers of Aretino's power to corrupt. Gabriel accuses both Aretino and "the Diuels Oratour" (i.e. Nashe) of atheism: "They neither feare Goodman Sathan, nor master Beelzebub, nor Sir Reverence, nor milord Governement himselfe: O wretched Atheisme, Hell but a scarecrow, and Heaven but a woonderclout in their doctrine" (176–77). Richard had also declared Aretino to be among the "infinite Atheists" who "spake ill of that heavenly God he knew not" and implores that "all students, and all Christians . . . [be kept] from such monstruous and vnprofitable singularitie: and out vpon al such Satanish bookes, that are printed I thinke in the deuils name."[52] In this iteration Aretino is not only an atheist, but a contagious one at that.

By the time that Nashe was referring to Aretino as a prototypical professional author, Aretino's reputation as an immoral foreign influence was already beginning to take hold in English literary culture. Nashe refused to acknowledge Harvey's connection between morality and writing style, whether in reference to Aretino, Tarlton, or Greene. There is no asymmetry between content and form for Harvey: the form or reputation of these men was bad, therefore the content of their writing or comedy was bad too. For Nashe, meanwhile, there should be a separation between the writer's role as the producer of literature, and the inevitable commodification of their reputation, which in the case of Aretino had become perversely exaggerated by later commentators. It would be in his unexpected eulogy to Aretino, who appears in the midst of the fictional adventures of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, that Nashe would illustrate this central disagreement of the Harvey-Nashe quarrel on the public morality of authors.

52. Richard Harvey, *A Theological Discourse of the Lamb of God* (1590), 95–96.

IV

Have with you to Saffron-Walden is usually thought of as Nashe's delayed rejoinder to Harvey's *New Letter of Notable Contents* (1593) and indeed its opening lines of dialogue see the fictionalized friends of Nashe discussing rumors that Nashe is "not able to answere [Harvey] he hath deferd it so long" (III:26). Echoes of the quarrel did, however, appear before 1596, for example in the second edition of Nashe's *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* (1594) in which Nashe vociferously revokes an apology he had extended to Harvey in the first edition, published the previous year. In 1594, *The Unfortunate Traveller* included an allusion to Harvey when a pedantic orator named Vanderhulke is mocked for his pomposity (II:248). While this could simply be a satire on academic speech, Nashe subsequently addresses Harvey as "My Doctour Vanderhulk" in *Have with you to Saffron-Walden* (III:31).[53] This allusion aside, it is in Nashe's digression on Aretino where Nashe returns to his main point of disagreement with Harvey, namely the relationship between an authorial persona or prose style, and the writer's lifestyle.

In the second half of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe uses the opportunity of the historical and geographical setting of pre-Tridentine Italy to discuss Aretino. He does so in a digression which sits pointedly within a narrative which has been noted for its strategic blurring of historical fact and fiction.[54] Aretino appears as one of the various historical characters in the text, a deus ex machina figure who saves the (fictional) protagonist Jack Wilton and the (historical) Earl of Surrey from prison after they are falsely accused of fraud. This section contains historical approximations of Aretino's biography, such as Aretino's claim to have helped release Marcantonio Raimondi from prison, and Aretino's payment by Henry VIII for dedicating his second volume of *Lettere* (1542) to the English king. Nashe then breaks off his fictional narrative to praise Aretino as an inspirational writer. Nashe uses the change from the unreliable perspective of his narrator to his authorial perspective to provide historical examples which disrupt the reader's expectations about this controversial figure.

53. As noted by Stephen S. Hilliard, *The Singularity of Thomas Nashe* (Lincoln, 1986), 160, and Rhodes, *Power of Eloquence*, 134–35.

54. See Allyna E. Ward, "An Outlandish Travel Chronicle: Farce, History, and Fiction in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 41 (2011), 84–98; Philip Edwards, "Unfortunate Travellers: Fiction and Reality," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 50 (1987), 295–307; Robert Weimann, "Fabula and Historia," *Representations* 8 (1984), 14–29.

Nashe's evocative opening lines of praise for Aretino emphasize first and foremost his career as a published writer and a prose stylist:

> It was one of the wittiest knaves that ever God made. If out of so base a thing as ink there may be extracted a spirit, he writ with nought but the spirit of ink, and his style was the spirituality of arts and nothing else; whereas all others of his age where but the lay temporality of inkhorn terms . . . His pen was sharp-pointed like a poniard; no leaf he wrote on but was like a burning-glass to set on fire all his readers. With more than musket-shot did he charge his quill, where he meant to inveigh. (II:264)

A stylist used to mixing high and low registers, Nashe drives home the point that Aretino's reputation as a "divine" writer is passed down to his readers in the "base" material of printers' ink. Ink was often made with urine, insuring that Nashe's comparison is even more exaggerated when he describes Aretino as transforming this waste product into the "spirituality of arts." In contrast to Aretino's wit, his contemporaries wrote with the "lay temporality of inkhorn terms," a term denoting academic pretention which Nashe's reuses to dismiss Harvey's "termagant inkhorne tearmes" (*Have with you*, III:42). Given the rest of this paragraph's use of violent metaphors (his pen "sharp pointed like a poniard," his quill charged with "musket-shot," and the power of his words akin to "burning glass") the "spirit of ink" may also refer to the caustic nature not only of Aretino's satire, but of the ink itself, as an alternative ingredient for ink was "vitriol" or sulphuric acid.[55]

Although the majority of Nashe's eulogy in *The Unfortunate Traveller* makes identifiable biographical references to Aretino, the praise for him as an inspirational and independently minded writer in these opening sentences is general enough that it could be applied to Nashe just as much as it was to Aretino, or, as Charles Nicholl suggests, as "a sidelong epitaph for Christopher Marlowe."[56] Nicholl suggests that Nashe could not overtly praise Marlowe and so used Aretino as an analogous figure, but arguably

55. See Mitchell M. Harris, "The Expenses of Ink and Wastes of Shame: Poetic Generation, Black Ink, and Material Waste in Shakespeare's Sonnets," in *The Materiality of Color: The Production, Circulation, and Application of Dyes and Pigments, 1400–1800*, ed. Andrea Feeser, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham, 2012), 65–80.

56. Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*, rev. ed. (London, 2002), 63.

Nashe is doing much more than using Aretino as a stand-in for Marlowe. While it is likely that Nashe would have been thinking of his erstwhile collaborator not so long after his violent death, Aretino should not be replaced completely in this passage, as he was clearly a figure with whom Nashe identified and was identified with.[57] Aretino represents both Marlowe and Nashe in the sense that he is representative of all professional writers, the risks that they took when making their writing publicly available, and the potential fate of being maligned and misunderstood by their readers after their death. Nashe also uses his digression to respond to Harvey's accusations of both his and Aretino's "lewde corruption" by questioning the connection between an author's behavior and his writing style. Nashe writes of Aretino:

> If lascivious he were, he may answere with *Ovid*, *vita verecunda est, musa iocosa mea est*, my lyfe is chast though wanton be my verse. Tell mee who is travelled in histories, what good poet is, or ever was there, who hath not hadde a lyttle spice of wantonnesse in his dayes? Even *Beza* himselfe by your leave. (II:266)

First, Nashe speculates that as he does not know much about Aretino's personality ("*If* lascivious") searching for evidence of wantonness in his writing will not give a conclusive answer. Secondly, he suggests that even if Aretino did have "a little spice of wantonnesse," it would be a vice shared with other writers, even (Nashe says with a wink) men of the cloth such as the Calvinist Theodore Beza to whom Harvey had referred with admiration in his *Pierces Supererogation*.

Though Nashe had himself mistakenly described Aretino as an atheist in *Strange Newes* (1592), in *The Unfortunate Traveller* he tackles specific rumors that had exaggerated the portrayal of Aretino into a blasphemer.[58] There was a rumor that Aretino's grave had been carved with a sarcastic epitaph, paraphrased in John Harington's *Alcilia* (1613) as: "Heere lyes Aretine, that poysonous Toade, / Whose spightfull tongue and Pen, all Saints beshrow him, / Did raile on Prince and Priest, and all but God, / And said for his excuse he did not know them."[59] Nashe refers to this rumor when he

57. "The name of Religion, bee it good or bad that is ruinated, God neuer suffers vnreuenged: Ile say of it as *Ouid* said of Eunuchs: *Qui primus pueris genitalia membra recidit, / Vulnera quae fecit debuit ipse pati*. / Who first depriude yong boies of their best part, / With selfe same wounds he gaue he ought to smart": Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, II:238.

58. See Nashe, *Strange Newes*, I:285.

59. "Epitaph of Aretine," in I. C., *Alcilia Philoparthens Loving Folly* (1613), N1v.

writes that "Too much gall dyd that wormwood of Gibeline wittes put in his inke, who engraved that rubarbe Epitaph on this excellent poet's tombstone" (II:265). Nashe here suggests that the epitaph was written as an attack on Aretino, unwittingly using the same image of a poisoned pen which contemporaries would use to describe Nashe's own acerbic writing after his death.

However, this epitaph was not the most notorious of the blasphemous texts to be attributed to Aretino. That honor fell to "the black book," *De tribus impostoribus mundi*, supposedly the most blasphemous book ever written, which dismissed the three prophets of monotheism as impostors. In reality this book never existed, but was a legend dating back to 1239 when Pope Gregory IX accused the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of having written such a treatise.[60] Over the centuries, free-thinkers would be accused of holding these beliefs, such as Marlowe who was accused by Richard Baines of saying that "Moyses was but a Jugler."[61]

In *The Lamb of God* (1590), Richard Harvey attributes this "horrible most damnable booke of three impostors" as well as the "Apologie of *Paedarastice*" (i.e. *La Cazzaria*, written by Antonio Vignali)[62] to Aretino which "prove him . . . a very incarnat deuill."[63] Gabriel Harvey unsurprisingly agreed with his brother, writing in *Pierces Supererogation* that Nashe had aligned himself with a notorious blasphemer who "forged the abominablest booke in the world, *De tribus impostoribus mundi*" (177). Gabriel connects Aretino to the "black book" a second time in *New Letter of Notable Contents* to illustrate Aretino's hypocrisy. He begins by declaring that he hopes Nashe will not prove to be "an Aretine":

> I would be loth, *He* [Nashe] should be an Aretin: that paraphrased the inestimable works of Moses, and discoursed the Capricious Dialogues of the rankest Bawdry. [He] penned one Apology of the divinity of Christ, and another of Pederastice, a kinde of harlatry, not to be recited: [he] published the Life of the Blessed Virgin, and the Legende of the Errant Putana: [he] recorded the history of S. Thomas Aquin, and forged the most detestable Black-booke, de tribus impostoribus mundi. O monster of extremityes; and o abom-

60. See Georges Minois, *The Atheist's Bible: The Most Dangerous Book that Never Existed*, trans. Lys Ann Weiss (Chicago, 2012), 43–44.

61. Richard Baines to the Privy Council, BL Harley MS 6848, ff. 185–86.

62. See Moulton's introduction to Antonio Vignali, *La Cazzaria: The Book of the Prick*, ed. Ian Moulton (Abingdon; New York, 2003).

63. Richard Harvey, *Lamb of God*, 96.

> ination of outragious witt. It was his glory, to be a *hellhounde incarnate. Ubi bene, nemo melius: ubi male, nemo peius* [Where good, no one better: where bad, no one worse].[64]

Harvey juxtaposes Aretino's religious and lascivious works to unmask his hypocrisy and, as Neil Rhodes puts it, to emphasize a "symbiotic relationship" between "irreligiousness and stylistic extravagance."[65] This symbiosis is reflected in the structure of the passage, and exemplifies Harvey's disbelief that Aretino could be both a writer of religious texts and of bawdy or blasphemous texts. He contrasts Aretino's biblical paraphrase *Il Genesi* (1535) against his dialogues on prostitutes, and his *Umanità di Cristo* (1535) against the "apology for pederasty" (i.e. the homoerotic *La Cazzaria*). He goes on to contrast Aretino's hagiographical texts, the *Vitae* of the Virgin Mary (1535) and Thomas Aquinas (1543), with two further texts not written by Aretino: Franco's *La Puttana Errante* and the mythical *De Tribus Impostoribus Mundi*. As Moulton points out "the three most notorious texts in the list . . . were not his."[66]

By contrast, in *The Unfortunate Traveller* Nashe lists Aretino's religious texts immediately after defending Aretino's "wanton verse" in order to show that an author could write in a range of styles and genres without necessarily behaving hypocritically, just as he had himself done by writing both the erotic poem *A Choice of Valentines* (c.1592) and the religious tract *Christ's Tears Over Jerusalem*. Aretino, like Nashe, had the ability to write in both veins:

> Singularly hath he commented of the humanitie of Christ. Besides, as Moses set forth his Genesis, so hath hee set forth his Genesis also, including the contents of the whole Bible. A notable Treatise he compiled, called, *I sette Psalmi poententiarii*. All the *Thomasos* have cause to love him, because hee hath dilated so magnificently of the lyfe of Saint *Thomas*. There is a good thing that hee hath set foorth, *La Vita della virgine Maria*, though it some-what smells of superstition; with a number more which here for tediousness, I suppresse. (II:265–66)

Not only is Nashe mirroring Harvey's listing of Aretino's works in *New Letter*, but by describing works that contemporary English readers might

64. Gabriel Harvey, *New Letter of Notable Contents*, D1.
65. Rhodes, *Power of Eloquence*, 119.
66. Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 147.

not even have been aware of Nashe is also showing his ability to research the bibliography of Aretino more accurately than Harvey (save for the Latinate rendering of *I sette psalmi de la penitentia di David*).

Nashe ends his epitaph on Aretino by defending his posthumous reputation against his English detractors. Taking leave of Aretino, Nashe writes:

> Peace to thy Ghost, and yet mee thinkes so indefinite a spirite should have no peace or intermission of paines, but be penning Ditties to the Archangels in another world. Puritans spue forth the venome of your dull inventions. A Toade swelles with thicke troubled poison, you swell with poisonous perturbations, your mallice hath not a cleare dram of anie inspired disposition. (II:266)

The words of puritanical writers (presumably including, but not necessarily limited to, the Harveys) are poisonous to Aretino's reputation, but in contrast to the Italian, previously praised as setting his readers alight with inspiration from his quick wit, their writing is once again described as "dull" and lacking even one "dram" of inspiration. The metaphor of infection previously used by Gabriel Harvey to describe Aretino's "attempt to putrefy gentle mindes, with the vilest impostumes of lewde corruption" is here used by Nashe to emphasize the poisonous effect that later mediators could have on an author's posthumous reputation (45). This was a topic which Nashe would return to in his final salvo in the Nashe-Harvey quarrel, *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*.

V

Aretino's fate had clarified for Nashe the Faustian pact of authorial self-promotion. Having traded on your reputation as a distinctive author, you had in effect commodified your authorial persona and made it the property of your readers. If the period saw an increased conflation of English authors with their books, then while this may have given Nashe greater power to "remak[e] himself through the press," the fact that Aretino's reputation had become so distorted after his death must have indicated to Nashe that the relative accessibility of print could damage, as much as empower, the author.[67] Aretino was, after all, the archetypal professional writer who had adopted print technology to increase his fame and wealth, but that same technology had allowed other "dull braine maligners" to "spue forth . . .

67. Mentz, "Day Labor," 31.

venome" and portray him as the embodiment of vice. In *The Unfortunate Traveller* Nashe tried to rescue Aretino from his own legend the only way he knew how, by insuring hidden facts about Aretino were published in order to balance Harvey's list of bawdy (and, it turns out, predominantly misattributed) texts in *Pierces Supererogation* with a list of Aretino's religious publications.

Nevertheless, Nashe's eulogy of Aretino was also a concession of how little control a writer had over their lasting reputation. Aretino's case had shown how the distortion of authorial identity would become exaggerated after death, as Nashe complained in *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*: "to be a villaine in print . . . is an attainder that will sticke by thee for ever . . . the innocent, unheard, doo perish as guilty" (III:27). The posthumous writer was in a paradoxical position. His authorial persona had been embodied by the text, but at the same time he was eternally absent from a text which had the ability to function beyond the presence of the author. It is this simultaneous presence and absence which Nashe's final image of Aretino's "Ghost" indefinitely "penning Ditties" illustrates. It is both an embrace and a lamentation of the absence of the author, where rumors stood in the place of his works.

For an author's reputation to survive posthumously, his writing must survive too, which to Nashe meant relying on a material which was equal parts ephemeral and self-replicating. Various combinations of texts surviving and being lost could, he realized, lead to one's reputation being distorted for perpetuity. With hindsight, we can see how tenuous a hold writers such as Nashe had over the survival of their work. *The Isle of Dogs* (1597), a play Nashe co-wrote with Ben Jonson, was shut down after reports were made to the Privy Council that it was lewd and slanderous; today it is considered a "lost play," having never been published.[68] Worse, both Nashe and Harvey's works were called in to be destroyed as part of the notorious "Bishops' Ban" of satirical writing in 1599, though it is difficult to ascertain how effective this act of censorship was, as copies of the listed authors do still survive today.[69]

68. See Ian Donaldson, ed., "The Isle of Dogs (lost play)," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, gen. ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge, Eng., 2012), I:101–09.

69. The effectiveness of the ban has been debated by various scholars. For two contrasting interpretations, see Richard A. McCabe, "Elizabethan Satire and the Bishops' Ban of 1599," *Yearbook of English Studies* 11 (1981), 188–94, and Lynda Boose, "The 1599 Bishops' Ban, Elizabethan Por-

It is not necessarily the ephemerality of printed texts, so easily censored and destroyed, which leads to the ossification of an authorial identity into stereotype. Perversely, it can be the proliferation of print which can speed up this process of simplification and vanished mediation. In some cases, print technology allows readers to compare and contrast varying interpretations of events, and to conclude that there is not one single truth.[70] We can see this in the way that Nashe approached the contrasting rumors of Aretino's epitaph in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. However, in other cases the technology to reproduce texts can accelerate one interpretation of events and create more "proof" to direct a reader's expectations in one direction, as illustrated by the repeated misattribution of various erotic images and texts to Aretino, which spanned centuries. While such repetition could be put down to a lack of interest in Aretino's non-erotic writing matched with the ease of reproduction, it ultimately helped to consolidate the author's reputation and "vanish" away any other interpretations. The problem, as expressed in my opening quotation from *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* in which Nashe fears that Harvey's work would survive while his would be silenced, lies in whether this textual reproduction was static (with a single narrative being exaggerated) or transformative (with multiple narratives being contrasted).

Pietro Aretino and the later generation of Elizabethan writers such as Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe were stylistic innovators who addressed their readers directly and conversationally, and gave the appearance of intimacy by providing semi-autobiographical glimpses into their private lives. The use of this tactic, as Wes Folkerth and Harald Hendrix have argued separately, created the illusion of a close bond between author and reader, with the intention to both entertain and sell more books. What marked Nashe out from his fellow writers was his acute awareness that the authorial tactic which had brought him fame came at a price. He may have used a similar strategy as Aretino in presenting himself as a scandalous yet relatable author, but Nashe also expressed dissatisfaction with the response this tactic engendered in some of his readers. In his prefatory letter to *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*, Nashe complains that his readers

nography and the Sexualization of the Jacobean State," in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca, 1994), 185–200.

70. As persuasively argued by Frances Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia, 2013) and Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580–1670* (Cambridge, Eng., 2004).

desire entertainment even at the expense of the health of writers: "so to recreate and enkindle their decayed spirites, they care not how they set Haruey and mee on fire one against another, or whet vs on to consume our selues" (III:30). Through commodifying themselves as public authors, Harvey and Nashe had already begun to appear fictional in the eyes of their readers. This, Nashe now knew, was exactly what had happened to that archetypal professional author, Pietro Aretino.

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